



Expert Contributor

New Blood Pressure Guidelines

By Rita May Ranck, RN, Expert Contributor, Caregivers Unlimited

The American Heart Association has recently set new guidelines to define high blood pressure. This is the first time this has been done since 2003. They did it to account for complications that can occur at lower numbers and to make earlier intervention available. This new definition will result in nearly half of the US population having high blood pressure, with the highest impact to be among young people. It is estimated that it will triple the numbers in men under forty-five and double the numbers in women in the same age group. Only a small increase is expected in the number of adults requiring antihypertensive (high blood pressure) medications because the American Heart Association wants to treat the younger population with lifestyle changes.

The new guidelines are as follows:

Normal: 120/80

Elevated: systolic (top number) between 121 and 129

Stage 1: systolic between 130 and 139 and/or diastolic (bottom number) between 81 and 89

Stage 2: systolic at least 140 and diastolic at least 90

Hypertensive Crisis: systolic over 180 and/or diastolic over 120

The treatment changes are as follows:

Only prescribing medications for stage 1 if a patient has already had a cardiovascular event or is a high risk for heart attack or stroke and recognizing that many people will need two or more types of medication to control their blood pressure.

The main objective behind changing



the guidelines was to increase public awareness, encourage lifestyle changes and to streamline antihypertensive medication initiation and intensification on adults with high blood pressure.

There are many types of home blood pressure monitoring devices avail for purchase these days. Most pharmacies have free blood pressure stations that can be used while waiting for or picking up your prescriptions.

Let's all monitor our blood pressure more closely and change our lifestyle to more healthy choices as high blood pressure is still known as the silent killer.

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